

Press release

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World Health Summit Regional Meeting 2026 Opens in Nairobi with Strong Call for Action on Resilient Health Systems



Photo credit: The Aga Khan University

The [World Health Summit Regional Meeting 2026](#) officially opened today in Nairobi, bringing together over 2000 global health leaders, policymakers, researchers, and development partners to advance solutions for stronger and more resilient health systems.

The opening day marked a significant moment for global health cooperation, with high-level discussions focusing on strengthening health systems resilience, advancing universal health coverage, and accelerating practical solutions to emerging health challenges. Discussions will be guided by the theme, 'Reimagining Africa's Health Systems: Innovation, Integration and Interdependence.'

Hosted by [the Aga Khan University \(AKU\)](#) and held in partnership with the [World Health Organization](#), the [Ministry of Health Kenya](#), and the [Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention \(Africa CDC\)](#), the meeting will feature over 80 sessions focused on strengthening health systems resilience, advancing universal health coverage, and accelerating innovation in global health.

The summit was officially opened by Kenya's President, H.E. William Ruto, who underscored the urgent need for a decisive shift in how Africa is positioned within the global health

architecture, calling on African health institutions, governments, donor agencies, and implementing partners to move beyond fragmented approaches and embrace system-wide transformation anchored in ownership, investment, and accountability.

“This imbalance is neither sustainable nor tenable. It calls for a decisive and deliberate shift—from fragmented, piecemeal interventions to comprehensive, system-wide transformation anchored in coherent strategy, financed through both domestic and international capital, and sustained by strong governance and accountable institutions. At the same time, Africa possesses unique advantages that must be fully harnessed... which together position the continent as a source of scalable solutions rather than a repository of persistent challenges.” — H.E. William Ruto

Speaking during the opening session, leaders emphasized that the Nairobi meeting represents an opportunity to move beyond dialogue and toward coordinated action.

“The World Health Summit Regional Meeting in Nairobi reflects the growing importance of Africa in shaping the global health agenda,” said Prof. Axel Pries, President of the [World Health Summit](#). “Our role is to convene leaders from across sectors and regions, and the goal is clear: to translate dialogue into practical action that strengthens health systems regionally worldwide.”

“For too long, Africa has been the subject of global health discussions held elsewhere, by others. Today, with delegates from more than 50 countries gathered on African soil, we are asserting something fundamental: that African institutions, African researchers, and African policymakers are not consumers of global health policy, we are its co-authors. This Summit will move us from the language of intention to the architecture of implementation,” Prof. Lukoye Atwoli, International President, WHSRM and Dean, Medical College East Africa, at AKU.

“Challenges do remain — climate change, chronic diseases, lack of financial resources, the digital divide, inequity and others that we will have to overcome - but I see a sector [in Africa] more capable than ever: better positioned to integrate systems, harness technology, and train the workforce needed for quality care and ethical leadership,” said Dr. Sulaiman Shahabuddin, President and Vice Chancellor, Aga Khan University.

For the World Health Organization (WHO), the discussions reinforced the importance of scaling proven approaches to universal health coverage through strong primary health care systems.

“This Summit marks a historic first and offers the kind of collaboration required to meet the challenges of the moment,” said Dr. Mohamed Yakub Janabi, WHO Regional Director for Africa. “The themes being discussed are deeply interconnected and will result in a blueprint for a new Africa that reflects a shift from addressing individual challenges to building a coherent health ecosystem.”

Kenya highlighted the significance of hosting the meeting as both a diplomatic and policy milestone.

"Global health security is not a luxury; it is a prerequisite for national stability. We must move from reactive crisis management to proactive pandemic preparedness," said Mary Muthoni, Principal Secretary Public Health & Professional Standards.

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention emphasized the growing role of African institutions in shaping the continent's health security agenda.

"Africa's health security and sovereignty depend on our ability to finance and build resilient systems at scale," said H.E. Dr. Jean Kaseya, Director General of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. "The World Health Summit Regional Meeting in Nairobi provides a critical platform to move from dialogue to action, mobilizing investment, strengthening partnerships, and advancing African-led solutions that reduce dependency and expand access to quality health care." Academic and research leadership was also highlighted as central to advancing evidence-based solutions.

As the meeting continues in Nairobi, leaders reaffirmed the importance of multilateral cooperation and shared responsibility in strengthening health systems and improving health outcomes globally.

About the World Health Summit

The World Health Summit is the leading platform for global health. Founded in 2009, it brings together leaders and changemakers from politics, science, the private sector, and civil society to set the agenda for a healthier future. The annual Summit is held every October in Berlin, organized by the WHS Foundation GmbH, a 100% subsidiary of Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin. The Summits are complemented each year by a WHS Regional Meeting held in a different part of the world, where regional health priorities take center stage.

About the Aga Khan University (AKU)

Aga Khan University is a private, not-for-profit institution committed to improving quality of life in the developing world through excellence in education, research, and health care delivery. With campuses and programs across Africa, South Asia, and the United Kingdom, AKU plays a leading role in advancing health systems strengthening, training health professionals, and generating evidence to inform policy and practice. The University is a key contributor to regional and global health innovation and capacity building.

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